

DCFS Advisory Board Meeting Minutes May 4, 2005

Board Members

Present: Mona Davis, Sherry Mangrum, Lisa McGee, Bruce Cohen, Rose Bates, Karen Worley, June Simpson, Ray Scott, Rose McGill, Connie Hickman, Consevella James, Janie Huddleston, Dana McClain

Board Members

Absent: Paul Kelly, Joyce Warren, Howard Turney, Brenda Gullett, Joyce Dees, John Smith, Bev Steimla, Claudette Zuber, Amber Reichard, Benny Goode, Naomi Camyn, Charlotte Ulickey, Carla Reyes, Jerry Walsh

Staff Members

Present: Roy Kindle, Pat Page, Rosemary White, Cecile Blucker, Marilyn Counts, Debbie Shiell, Georganne Lewis, David Tindall, Kim Alexander, Billye Burke

Introductions

Roy Kindle welcomed all Board Members present and asked everyone to introduce themselves. Mr. Kindle recognized Janie Huddleston who spoke about a new division created during legislative session by the passing of a bill that brings the Health Department into DHS as the Division of Health.

Review of Minutes

Pat Page asked if Board Members had reviewed minutes of the previous meeting and called for questions. Ms. Page asked the Board to review the remaining handouts.

Role of Advisory Committee

Pat Page asked for comments and suggestions regarding needs of Committee Members. Consevella James asked that a summary of suggestions and outcomes be included in meetings. Pat asked if voting or consensus was the Board's preferred means for determining what would be accepted as necessary action items and it was decided that consensus would be the determining factor on these items. Bruce Cohen asked for materials to be distributed upon request by Board Members regarding matters they can be actively involved in. June Simpson asked that a member of the Arkansas Children's Hospital be considered as a Board Member. Pat Page also suggested a Child Abuse Prevention member be added to the Board. *This will be an Action Item.*

Another action item requested was update on adoption delays.

Legislative Update

Lisa McGee gave an update on legislation considered in the legislative session with in depth discussion on:

- Juvenile Code emergency clause allowing relatives to open provisional Foster homes
- Garrett's Law (data to be reported to the Legislature)
- Independent Living versus Permanency
- Act 1255 Children and Education Issues

Ms. McGee distributed a handout detailing aspects of the legislation reviewed and acted upon which included but was not limited to I.D.E.A., Meth legislation, Emancipation, Parental Visitation, Changes in Maltreatment Act, Crimes Against Children, and Act 1961. May 13 is sine die. Legislation without an emergency clause is effective August 13.

In discussion of Garrett's Law, Karen Worley asked about the possibility of a Physician Hotline. Billye Burke said CACD was not willing to do this due to resource issues. It was asked if reports could be faxed. The answer was—yes they can, but there may be a delay in handling faxed reports. Dr. Worley also asked for the caseworkers to be able to call in with reports. Mr. Kindle said that the issue had been discussed and that the decision had been made during the legislative session not to allow this. Mr. Kindle said we will be looking at data resulting from implementation of the law, studying that data and noting calls regarding the particulars of the law's application.

The Committee requested an action item of reporting on the implementation of the law, including types of reports, types of reporters, and the % of physicians that were reporters. There was discussion of concerns that public dissemination of information about the law would make women who had abused drugs afraid to seek prenatal care or go to a hospital for delivery. It was suggested that hospitals should be asked to collect data. We need to consider a policy which would allow women added to the registry as a result of Garrett's Law to come off the registry faster, once they demonstrate rehabilitation.

How to involve the Committee during the legislative session was discussed. There needs to be a strategic plan for handling the legislation and the committee could be updated through emails during the session. Bruce Cohen suggested and was joined by others regarding their willingness to take proactive positions on this type of legislation. It was suggested that for the next session, the Committee pick three issues to suggest legislation in and to follow. There would need to be data to back up the issues.

Levels of Care

Billye Burke discussed the PIP Levels of Care (LOC) project. The LOC report will be sent to the Advisory Committee, along with the Executive Staff response. DCFS will look at the current system and the equity in that system. Board Payments and the old process versus any merits in the new process. The process to determine higher board rate payments was reviewed and discussed. Currently, the foster parent must request a special board rate. The Committee suggested that the worker needs to be the one requesting the special board on behalf of the foster parent. Foster parents and workers need to be told about the process. Communication is important.

The issue of retroactivity needs to be addressed and whether, when a child moves, the process must start over again, even if they had special board in another home. This is a practice issue. The system does not appear to be uniform. Rosemary White took questions regarding the Board Rate Payments being different in different counties and said that she will evaluate the application of the current policy. *This will be an Action Item.*

Financial Status

Cecile Blucker said that DCFS cost allocations and projections are positive. The legislative session approved the appropriation we had requested for \$110 million for FY 06 and \$116 million for FY 07. We received no additional general revenue. Two cost plan amendments have helped the division along with grant adjustments on IV-E eligibility and targeted case management. Mileage increase and additional staff cost are issues now being considered. Unless there is large increase in children in foster care, we will not need a reallocation of resources. We will have enough funding if we are fully staffed.

Staffing

Rosemary White said that a new development includes the County Office Areas being divided in half with Kim Alexander handling the Western Areas 1-6 and Debbie Shiell handling the Eastern Areas 7-10 and Adoption. They visit each area once a month and meet with area managers regarding management and problem solving. Northwest Arkansas has been challenged with short staffing and an special team (10 caseworkers and supervisors) has been established to clear up overdue investigations. There are ten vacancies in Benton County and nine in Washington County. Sebastian County had 44 children enter foster care so far this month.

There has also been a significant change in Pulaski County offices: the Placement Unit was disbanded because of ineffectiveness; the county supervisor in each office was changed. We are moving to increased accountability and toward best case practice.

There was discussion about Lonoke County. Debbie said it is the second fastest growing county in the state. Connie said that there are no children entering case in Lonoke county.

It was asked – what specifically is the Division doing to fill positions? We are recruiting at colleges in the area and statewide. We are taking on-site applications from students and conducting pre-interviews. We are speaking to classes and recruiting there. We are developing job-share positions for part-time employment. Recruitment measures have been taken to target applicants to these specific areas. Larry Stricklen has visited colleges (in-state and out-of-state in the region) and other facilities in a search for qualified applicants.

As part of a Recruitment Plan Julie Munsell has \$5,000 to work with Cox Cable on spots. In addition to statewide applications we are advertising by position in Northwest Arkansas, with the position being tied to a particular county. Part of the staffing issue in Benton County was that four workers were promoted to supervisor, leaving vacant worker positions. DF&A is working on a cost benefit analysis study of like positions to see how we could become more competitive. We are pursuing workers who left and some are coming back. It was suggested that we create a pool of workers who are ready to go and consider rovers or transition workers. It was also suggested that we examine where workers are NOT leaving and why.

Mona reported that in her area staffing is a big challenge, as is supporting workers that are hired. They are hooking new workers up with experienced workers. Yell County is seeing an increase in Hispanics and in FINS.

It was suggested that we examine caseloads. Mr. Kindle said we are doing it now and looking at the best utilization of staff in the field. The question was asked – is DCFS losing staff to DCO? We have lost some – some are wanting to come back. Supervision is a key to retaining staff. The University Partnership is now mentoring new supervisors like they have been mentoring new workers.

There was concern expressed that we are “moving backwards” to pre-Angela R. staffing problems. The question was asked – what are the implications for accreditation? Mr. Kindle responded – COA knows we have a plan to address the issue and they are OK with it. We have 19 stipend students and four MSW’s that will graduate and come to work in June.

In terms of staffing for adoptions, we are adding two stipend students, then we will only have five vacancies. A new supervisor should be hired within the next few days.

A new Foster Parent Ombudsman was hired – Miranda Raines, who was an FSW from White County. A positive report was given about an effort in Northwest Arkansas to form a Foster Parent Foundation that will collect car seats and toys for foster parents. We are looking at best utilization of resources.

Staffing is another action item for follow up.

Annual Report Card (ARC)/ Quarterly Performance Report (QPR)

Marilyn Counts handed out ARC and QPR at this meeting and called for discussion. The crisis areas were discussed. Marilyn and the QA staff went to Area One for two weeks to assist in these counties with much success. These areas are in the process of being evaluated and re-staffed, but because of the temporary shortage these issues do affect the total statistics. We will send out copies of the ARC.

Supervisory Review Tool

The Supervisory Review Tool was demonstrated by slide presentation to the Board and was widely appreciated by the area offices as a time saving tool for reporting with the success rate demonstrated in the analysis of its use.

Overview of new I.D.E.A.

Dana McClain said that because of time constraints she would be willing to make a presentation on the new I.D.E.A. at the next scheduled meeting.

Belief Based Performance Management

Roy Kindle said that he would make his presentation at the next scheduled meeting because of time constraints.

Renegotiated PIP

Pat Page handed out copies of the PIP Renegotiation and discussed issues of assessment and case planning, stating that most of the PIP has been completed.

Additional Information

Pat informed everyone that the COA Roundtable meeting is in Little Rock, October 17-19 and that they are invited.

Next Scheduled Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 17, 2005 from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

DCFS Advisory Board Action Item List

- 1) Addition of Board members from Arkansas Children's Hospital and Child Abuse Prevention Board
- 2) Address delays in adoptive placements
- 3) Update on implementation of Garrett's Law
- 4) Update on Levels of Care decisions and review of current special board process
- 5) Update on staffing